

Another sneak peek at Brexit book ‘Will the Tory Party Ever Be the Same?: The Effect of Brexit’

The fourth book in our Bite-Size book series ‘Will the Tory Party Ever Be the Same?: The Effect of Brexit’ has now been published and is available for you to enjoy! We’re celebrating the book’s release by giving you another sneak peek at a selection of writing from many of the book’s contributors. [Check out the first sneak peek here.](#)

‘Will the Tory Party Ever Be the Same?: The Effect of Brexit’, edited by John Mair, Paul Davies and Neil Fowler, provides insights and different perspectives on a really important political question. The UK is in turmoil; Parliament in chaos and the Tories left facing several directions at the same time. Will they survive?

The book boasts a wide variety of contributors, including Sir John Redwood, Damian Green and Lord Heseltine, as well as historian Richard Gaunt and distinguished commentators, including Peter Hitchens, Matthew D’Ancona, Eben Black and Liz Gerard.

Your sneak peek...

Lord Heseltine

Theresa May is effectively gone. She is a leader in name only

A referendum now would at least give people the chance to react to the realisation that the easy and facile promises of three years ago have evaporated. £350m a week for the NHS has become a £39bn severance cost to leave the EU, every penny of it to be borrowed by the current political generation, but to be repaid by the young people coming after them.

I am opposed to all the compromises on offer, from Norway plus to Common Market 2.0 and the so-called Canada-style agreement. In one way or another, they would make us second-class citizens in a second-class country.

MPs have rightly rejected the threat of no deal, which removes one disastrous option. All the other options, half-in half-out, satisfy no one. Only another referendum would give us a chance to stay in and pursue the course we have followed with such success over the past 50 years.

Richard Gaunt, University of Nottingham

A Robert Peel moment?

The Conservatives remain in a precarious position, but division is by no means inevitable

During 2018, Jacob Rees-Mogg explicitly likened May's situation to that of Robert Peel in 1846; however, whilst Brexiteers typically extol historical parallels, they would do well to consider the fundamental differences between the two episodes.

First, Peel's Conservatives were elected to Parliament in June 1841 on a pledge to uphold economic protection, in the face of the Whigs' proposed relaxation of duties on imports including corn. While Peel avoided a personal pledge on the issue, many of his backbenchers regarded it as a betrayal of their electors when he subsequently pursued repeal, in defiance of the platform upon which they had been returned to power. Peel was dismissive of those Conservative backbenchers who fought by-elections to secure a new electoral mandate, after coming out in favour of the measure. For him, sovereignty resided in Parliament, under the clear direction of the executive.

Though there may be comparisons here with the way in which Parliament has asserted its right to be actively involved in the Brexit process, the crucial difference arises from the fact that David Cameron's Conservative manifesto for the 2015 General Election promised a UK-wide referendum on the European issue.

Victor Hill, financial economist

I think I know what the Tories are for – but am I deluding myself?

The Conservative Party was an alliance built on four pillars, but those pillars have now moved on – and the Tories haven't

What is the Conservative Party for? That is the question that successive generations of Tory leaders have had to confront since the party first emerged as a coherent entity under Sir Robert Peel in the 1840s. That was in the aftermath of the Great Reform Act of 1832 which expanded suffrage for the first time and the internecine animosity precipitated by the repeal of the Corn Laws.

From the first, the Conservative Party was an alliance of mutual interests between very different social groups. The aristocracy, inspired by a past that made them landed, joined forces with the merchant class who foresaw a moneyed future. Together, they could propel the economic and social changes demanded by the coming of the railways, the emergence of (what we would call) consumerism, the displacement of populations from the countryside to the towns...the rise of Empire.

Eben Black, EruditePR

Game, set and match

Conservative MPs are not acting like a political party. That's why it could all be over for them

I can't remember much about the 1960s – for reasons of age, not lifestyle – but in the minds of the public I understand Europe did not really loom large, apart from the coming of the package holiday to Spain. But politicians were waking up to the importance of the 'Common Market' on their doorstep.

Charles de Gaulle said 'non, non, non' to Britain joining in 1963 and 1967. Large parts of the Conservative Party agreed with him, although they were also outraged that a jumped up, tin-pot foreigner who should be grateful that 'we' liberated his country from the Hun could say no to Great Britain. A remarkable feature of Conservative Euroscepticism is the ability to hold two conflicting thoughts at the same time.

I can remember the 1975 Referendum after Edward Heath took the UK into Europe in 1973. I remember my younger self, waking up to politics for the first time, being shocked at the lack of party unity, on both Labour and Tory sides. How could people of such fundamentally opposing views be in the same party? I asked myself. I would ask the same question about the Conservatives now.

Nicholas Stone, economics and politics writer

**There may be some wilderness years, but the Tories will survive
Current divisions are not helpful, and previous internal battles
were disastrous, but the Conservative Party will always bounce
back**

Despite open divisions, the unfolding Brexit crisis has largely demonstrated that the Conservatives prioritise party unity over national interest.

Current prime minister Theresa May has been a lifelong Conservative. She won't want to be remembered as the Conservative leader whose Brexit divided the party she leads. However she does lead a party which is struggling to coalesce around an agreed policy on the future relationship with the Europe.

On her right, is the ruthless European Research Group (ERG) of around 90 MPs who are indifferent to party unity except on their own terms. While on her left are more sympathetic party grouping who yearn for a closer economic relationship with the Europe.

On Brexit, Mrs May has generally tacked to the right and the ERG. Her preferred Brexit vision laid out in her 2017 Lancaster House speech and a series of Commons amendments since have aimed to appease the wing more wanting to press for the most abrupt form of Brexit. This was illustrated when more than 100 of her own parliamentary party rejected the Government's negotiated Withdrawal Agreement. While she initially made cross-party overtures, ultimately it was ERG demands over the backstop which has directed Mrs May's course of action. In other words, party unity remains the prize.

[Will the Tory Party Ever Be the Same?: The Effect of Brexit is available NOW in Paperback and Digitally on Amazon here.](#)

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